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The Discreet Charm of the Megafauna

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The Discreet Charm of the Megafauna

After Daniel Coleman

Too cool for the steady

(Huff!)

transformation of
forests into farmable
predator
acres

(perfect half circle in the air)

transformation of
free suburbs about 30 million
interdigital glands

deer like city life almost

the perfect opportunity to see who's who
how humans
polish their bony spars

there's a group of seven who have worn a path below bolting
our bowing jabs
stink bombs

(I don't have a great sense of

smell) sharp as gasoline winter

the marshy spot inside of the knee

urine-and-musk scented soup

cures scurvy

(Be good, neighbours

(I've come to call, the deer

(gorgeous half-moon, vault

a deer has always been a deer

hunger Niagara Iroquoia vitamins

Haudenosaunee Wildlife

(euonymous

Authority Park is a test tube

a treaty signed in 1701 is still binding

(I don't have as many fantasies about hunting rifles as I used to)

proceed with caution

slice up the escarpment

braid the cloverleaf

clip the top rail

they cull the hiking trails

walk, unpressured and unbidden, into the city

dangerous your own, unmarked coat

Note on the Text

I wrote “The Discreet Charm of the MegaFauna” in homage to Daniel Coleman’s excellent article “Deer in Their Own Coats” (14.1). Careful reading will reveal that every line of my poem appears in Daniel’s article; I have been working lately with poetic forms of borrowing like the cento, and I couldn’t resist Daniel’s great lines about stink bombs and scurvy. In addition, like Daniel, I am often out in the semi-wild woods near my home, watching animals negotiate the in-between spaces, and doing a little of the same myself. I was envious as I read about his frequent encounters with the deer. I also thought about the warning from ecocritics and environmentalists that “charismatic megafauna” like deer attract our attention more than squirrels or rats do. Finally, I was interested in coaxing out a voice that I heard echoing beneath the original article, the voice that emerges in the half-bracketed sections until the “park as test tube” becomes an experiment in human behaviour. Who owns an unmarked coat?

TANIS MacDONALD lives in Waterloo, where she is an Associate Professor in the Department of English and Film Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University. She is the author of three books of poetry, the latest of which is *Rue the Day* (2008), as well as the Gabrielle Roy Prize-nominated *The Daughter’s Way: Canadian Women’s Paternal Elegies* (2012).